

The previous question was ordered.
The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

APPOINTMENT OF CONFEREES ON H.R. 2990, QUALITY CARE FOR THE UNINSURED ACT OF 1999

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KOLBE). Without objection, the Chair appoints the following conferees on the bill (H.R. 2990) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow individuals greater access to health insurance through a health care tax deduction, a long-term care deduction, and other health-related tax incentives, to amend the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 to provide access to and choice in health care through association health plans, to amend the Public Health Service Act to create new pooling opportunities for small employers to obtain greater access to health coverage through HealthMarts; to amend title I of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974, title XXVII of the Public Health Service Act, and the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to protect consumers in managed care plans and other health coverage; and for other purposes:

From the Committee on Commerce, for consideration of the House bill, and the Senate amendment, and modifications committed to conference:

Messrs. BILEY, BILIRAKIS, SHADEGG, DINGELL, and PALLONE.

From the Committee on Ways and Means, for consideration of the House bill, and the Senate amendment, and modifications committed to conference:

Mr. ARCHER and Mr. THOMAS, Mrs. JOHNSON of Connecticut, Mr. RANGEL and Mr. STARK, provided that Mr. MCCRERY is appointed in lieu of Mrs. JOHNSON of Connecticut for consideration of title XIV of the House bill and sections 102, 111(b) and 304 and title II of the Senate amendment.

From the Committee on Education and the Workforce for consideration of the House bill, and the Senate amendment, and modifications committed to conference:

Messrs. BOEHNER, TALENT, FLETCHER, CLAY, and ANDREWS.

As additional conferees from the Committee on Government Reform, for consideration of section 503 of the Senate amendment, and modifications committed to conference:

Messrs. BURTON of Indiana, SCARBOROUGH, and WAXMAN.

As additional conferees for consideration of the House bill, and the Senate amendment, and modifications committed to conference:

Mr. GOSS and Mr. BERRY.

There was no objection.

COUNTY SCHOOLS FUNDING REVITALIZATION ACT OF 1999

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 352 and rule

XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for consideration of the bill, H.R. 2389.

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IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the consideration of the bill (H.R. 2389) to restore stability and predictability to the annual payments made to States and counties containing National Forest System lands and public domain lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management for use by the counties for the benefit of public schools, roads, and other purposes, with Mr. KOLBE in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to the rule, the bill is considered as having been read the first time.

Under the rule, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. GOODLATTE) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. STENHOLM) will each control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. GOODLATTE).

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chairman, today the House considers H.R. 2389, a bill that has been under consideration in my subcommittee for several months, but whose time has been long in coming. Nearly 100 years ago the Federal Government, as a condition of managing our national forest lands, established a compact with forest-dependent communities in rural America. Under the terms of this compact, the government would own and manage the forests, not only for the long-term environmental benefit of the resource, but also for the long-term social and economic benefit of rural communities in and adjacent to the forest.

Recently, revenue-sharing payments with rural communities guaranteed under the compact have dropped in some communities by as much as 90 percent. Local administrator after local administrator told my subcommittee about the drastic and tragic measures their school systems have taken just to fight foreclosure. The compact is not working, and our rural schools cannot wait any longer.

A coalition of local school systems developed a set of principles which attempts to breath new life into their compact with the Federal Government. Their idea has been well received across the country. Their supporters top 800 grass roots organizations in 36 States, that range from school districts and administrators to the National Education Association, the National Association of Counties, the United States Chamber of Commerce, organized labor, and other groups.

Their principles are embodied in H.R. 2389, the Secure Rural Schools and Communities Self-determination Act of 1999. As we consider this legislation

today, we, as Members of this House, are faced with one overriding question: Who knows better what needs to be done to help forest-dependent communities in rural America, rural America, or Washington?

This bill is representative government at its best. Local leaders recognize that the compacts of 1908 and 1937 need to be strengthened for the short term to immediately arrest the decline in and stabilize the revenues derived from Federal forest lands until permanent improvements to existing law can be made.

They crafted their solution, garnered support from all regions of the country, and entrusted us to do the right thing.

The challenges facing forest counties are so dramatic and so widespread that soon after the House Committee on Agriculture unanimously approved H.R. 2389, several Members expressed a strong interest in the bill. The legislation was introduced by the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. DEAL) and the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BOYD), and I commend them for their initiative.

The gentleman from New York (Mr. BOEHLERT) and the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) became actively engaged, and spent countless hours working with us to ensure the compacts between the Federal government and the forest counties are honored.

The bill we consider today is the product of the locally-crafted solution and our intense interest to promote the interests of forest counties. H.R. 2389 establishes a temporary national safety net which ensures a stable payment to forest communities for the short term, while giving local communities and educators a direct stake in crafting a long-term policy that will put schoolchildren in forest communities on equal footing with their peers in other parts of the country.

Despite the overwhelming support for this bill, we do expect a poison pill amendment to be offered. The expected amendment will be dressed up to appear as a county-friendly amendment. We have talked it through with the counties, and they oppose this and all amendments, and support H.R. 2389 as it is finally crafted.

Time is of the essence. Forest counties cannot wait any longer. Key Senators have agreed to take this bill and use it as their vehicle in the Senate. We must oppose this and any other amendment, for quick passage in both the House and Senate. H.R. 2389 is strongly supported by the National Education Association and the National Association of Counties, two longtime advocates of rural education. They also oppose any amendments.

I hope that we will be fully committed to helping all the proponents of H.R. 2389, the most important being the families and communities of rural America. This bill helps rural America achieve what they have set out to achieve. It revitalizes their compact with the Federal government in a way